



State of Arizona

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Governor Jan Brewer Establishes Arizona Child Safety Task Force

Task Force to Study Child-Safety Policies in Arizona and Other States, Issue Recommendations

PHOENIX – Governor Jan Brewer today announced via Executive Order the establishment of the Arizona Child Safety Task Force. Members of the task force will be charged with reviewing the state's child-safety policies and the best practices of other states.

The Child Safety Task Force must issue to the Governor – no later than Dec. 31, 2011 – a detailed list of recommendations for statutory, organizational, management or protocol reforms necessary to enhance the welfare of children under state supervision or custody. As part of its review, the Task Force will conduct two public meetings between now and the end of the year.

Announcement of the Task Force comes as the Arizona Department of Economic Security has released a report detailing immediate reforms to improve the agency's operations, transparency and accountability when it comes to the safety and welfare of children under the state's watch.

"Child Protective Services caseworkers and staff perform critically important and exceptionally difficult work, and their margin for error is thin," said Governor Brewer. "So I commend DES Director Clarence Carter for identifying immediate reforms that can help the agency perform more efficiently and effectively."

"While the agency implements the report's findings, I'll be asking experts appointed to the Child Safety Task Force to look at the bigger-picture issues involving child protection. By reviewing the State's conduct of investigations, oversight of children in its care and other issues – as well as learning from the best practices in other states – Arizona can work to ensure the safest environment possible for this vulnerable population."

Governor Brewer will appoint members to the Task Force. They will include: a judge with experience in cases of child abuse or neglect; a county attorney or his/her designee; a medical professional with experience treating children who have suffered abuse or neglect; a victim advocate; the director of the Department of Economic Security and director of CPS; a member of the Arizona State Senate and House of Representatives; a representative of a child abuse prevention and treatment organization; a university representative responsible for the education and training of social workers, the director of the Governor's Office of Children Youth and Families; and other individuals with experience in best practices related to child welfare.

The Task Force will engage with outside experts in the child-welfare field, and CPS caseworkers and supervisors will be able to participate and share their opinions with impunity.

“No single person has all the answers. But I’m confident, by bringing together a panel of Arizona’s leaders in child welfare and learning from model programs in other states, we can make a difference in the lives of children under our oversight,” said Governor Brewer. “We will move quickly to appoint and convene the Arizona Child Safety Task Force, and I look forward to its recommendations.”

Among its responsibilities, the Task Force will review: the process by which cases of abuse and neglect are detected, investigated and addressed; monitoring of children under the state’s protective custody; criteria in other states for substantiating reports of abuse or neglect; national best practices for abuse or neglect investigations; federal mandates related to CPS; educational and training requirements for CPS caseworkers and supervisors; and improvements to investigation practices, staff development, caseload management, resource allocation and public information.

“I’m encouraged by the steps the Governor has taken and the leadership she is showing,” said Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery. “I look forward to being part of the discussion and helping to make Arizona the safest state in the nation for children.”

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